

2026 Census topic consultation - Phase two: Submission form

This document can be used to help draft a collaborative submission or if you prefer you can email your response back to us.

On completion, please check and submit your form via:

Online: Please visit the [ABS Consultation Hub](#)

Email: census.content@abs.gov.au

Post: 2026 Census Topic Consultation
Locked Bag 10
Belconnen ACT 2616

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Introduction

This consultation is seeking feedback on topics that are being considered for change or removal from the 2026 Census. We are asking questions on topics where we require more information to inform our assessment and recommendation.

Each question seeking feedback on topics is optional. You can choose which topics you would like to provide feedback on.

While the ABS is not requesting specific feedback on [all topics proposed for addition, change or removal](#), there is the opportunity to provide additional feedback on the last page of the questionnaire.

You do not need to provide information that was already included in your phase one submission.

The required components of a submission to this consultation are:

- confirming if you consent for your submission to be published (*Consent to publish submissions following the consultation period*)
- your email address (*Contact details*)
- confirming if you wish to receive email updates (*Contact details*).

Consent to publish submissions following the consultation period

Collection Notice

The 2026 Census Topic Consultation Collection Notice is available at [2026 Census Topic Consultation : Phase Two Collection Notice](#)

Consent to Publish

If you consent, the ABS will publish your submitted information (including attachments), without your name or contributors' names and contact details, on the ABS Consultation Hub so that others can see it. If you prefer, organisation names will also be removed from your submission before it is published.

If your submission lists other persons or organisations as contributors to your submission, you must obtain their consent before agreeing for the ABS to publish your submission.

The ABS reserves the right to remove defamatory material, to de-identify personal or sensitive information, and to publish or not publish submissions at our discretion.

Do you give permission for the ABS to publish your submission after the consultation closes? (Select one) (Required)

By selecting 'Yes, publish without my name, contributors' names and email addresses':

You give permission for the ABS to publish your responses, including information in attachments, about the data you want us to collect as well as which organisation(s) you are representing. Contact name(s) for you and any other individual(s) listed in the submission and your email address will not be published.

By selecting 'Yes, publish without my name, contributors' names and email addresses, and organisation details':

You give permission for the ABS to publish your responses, including information in attachments, about the data you want us to collect. The organisation(s) you are representing, contact name(s) for you and any other individual(s) listed in the submission and email address will not be published.

By selecting 'No':

No part of your submission will be published.

- ☐ Yes, publish without my name, contributors' names and email addresses
- ☐ Yes, publish without my name, contributors' names and email addresses, and organisation details
- ☐ No

Contact details

Please provide details of the best contact for this submission. These details will be used if we have any follow-up questions.

The [ABS Privacy Policy](#) outlines how the ABS will handle any personal information that you provide to us.

Contact name

Organisation (If applicable)

Email address (Required)

Do you wish to receive email updates on the outcomes of this consultation and at key points in the 2026 Census topic review process? (Required)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Select the category that best describes you or the organisation you represent (Select one)

☐ Individual

☐ Academia/educational institution

☐ Australian government

☐ Business

☐ Community organisation

☐ Industry body/association

☐ Local government

☐ Non-government organisation

☐ State/territory government

☐ Other (please specify)

Has this submission been prepared in collaboration with any other individual(s) or organisation(s)?

We will not automatically send updates directly to these individuals or organisations. If they wish to receive email updates on the 2026 Census topic consultation process, they can subscribe to our [Mailing list](#).

☐ Yes – please list name, organisation (if applicable) and email address in the section below.

☐ No

Additional individual(s) or organisation(s)

Potential removal - Number of children ever born

What we are considering

Number of children ever born data is used to calculate fertility outcomes of females at different ages and is needed for informing fertility assumptions used in population projections for Australia. We are considering removing this topic for the 2026 Census as the existing uses we are aware of do not require data to be collected every five years. The ABS would next collect data on this topic in the 2031 Census.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Number of children ever born and if you need data on this topic to be collected every Census. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

➤ [Assessment criteria](#)

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

Background information

The 2021 Census collected information on the Number of children ever born to each female aged 15 years and over. The ABS will look to re-design the question the next time the topic is collected in the Census to recognise that people who do not identify as female may have given birth and to support a broader analysis of fertility patterns. Although the ABS is not requesting specific feedback there is an option to provide further information below.

You can find more information about [Number of children ever born](#) in our Census dictionary.

Do you currently use Number of children ever born data from the Census? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if this topic was not collected in the 2026 Census and next collected in the 2031 Census.

Do you have any further information on the Number of children ever born topic to inform our assessment?

Potential removal - Number of motor vehicles

What we are considering

We are considering removing this topic for the 2026 Census given alternative data sources are available that provide information relating to the number of motor vehicles. The alternative data sources include state and territory vehicle registrations by location and [Road Vehicles, Australia](#) by the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Number of motor vehicles. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

► [Assessment criteria](#)

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

Background information

The 2021 Census collected information on the number of registered motor vehicles owned or used by household members that were garaged or parked at or near private dwellings on Census Night.

You can find more information about [Number of motor vehicles](#) in our Census dictionary.

Do you currently use Number of motor vehicles data from the Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

**Would the alternative data source listed further above meet your data needs if this topic was removed from the 2026 Census?
(Select one)**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if this topic was removed from the 2026 Census.

Please provide a detailed explanation of what you cannot do without the Census data.

Do you have any further information on the Number of motor vehicles topic to inform our assessment?

Potential removal - Unpaid work - domestic activities

What we are considering

We are considering removing this topic for the 2026 Census given alternative data sources are available that provide more detailed information relating to unpaid domestic work, however these sources do not provide data at the same level of geography. The alternative data sources include the [Time Use Survey \(TUS\)](#) and the [Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia \(HILDA\) Survey](#). The ABS has been funded to conduct the TUS on an ongoing basis from 2024.

The ABS is planning to retain the following topics in their current forms: Unpaid care of children, and Unpaid work – voluntary work for an organisation or group.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Unpaid work - domestic activities. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

► [Assessment criteria](#)

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

Background information

The 2021 Census collected information on the number of hours (in ranges) people spent in the previous week doing domestic work without pay. Domestic work is defined as work for the individual or household, whether in the household or in other places.

You can find more information about [Unpaid domestic work](#) in our Census dictionary.

Do you currently use Unpaid work - domestic activities data from the Census? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

**Would the alternative data sources listed further above meet your data needs if this topic was removed from the 2026 Census?
(Select one)**

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if this topic was removed from the 2026 Census.

Please provide a detailed explanation of what you cannot do without the Census data.

Do you have any further information on the Unpaid work - domestic activities topic to inform our assessment?

Potential removal and potential changes - Work topics

What we are considering

The 2021 Census collected a range of data relating to Work, including:

- Labour force status (Employed; Unemployed; Not in the labour force)
- Status in employment (Employee; Owner manager; Contributing family worker)
 - For Owner managers, Incorporation status and Number of employees
- Hours worked
- Occupation
- Industry of employment

While the broader theme of labour force in the Census is important, there is a need to ensure that the data collected is of the highest public value.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Work. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

There are four aspects of the Work topics that we are seeking feedback on. These include:

- Incorporation status (owner manager)
- Number of employees (employed by owner managers)
- Joblessness
- Employment arrangements/job security

➤ [More information](#)

You can find more information about [Labour force status](#), [Number of employees](#) and [Status in employment](#) in our Census dictionary.

Collecting additional data on owner managers, that is, the incorporation status and the number of employees of their business

We need more information about how data relating to people who have their own business is used.

There are alternative data sources available that provide information relating to owner managers' incorporation status and/or the number of employees of their business. These alternative data sources include the monthly [Labour Force, Jobs in Australia](#) (which uses personal income tax data available from the Linked Employer Employee Dataset (LEED)), and [Counts of Australian Businesses, including Entries and Exits](#).

Do you currently use Incorporation status (owner manager) data from the Census? (Select one)

☐ Yes

0 No

Would the alternative data sources listed further above meet your data needs if Incorporation status (owner manager) was removed from the 2026 Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if data on Incorporation status (owner manager) was not collected on the 2026 Census.

Please provide a detailed explanation of what you cannot do without the Census data.

Do you currently use Number of employees (employed by owner managers) data from the Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Would the alternative data sources listed further above meet your data needs if Number of employees (employed by owner managers) was removed from the 2026 Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Number of employees (employed by owner managers) data was not collected on the 2026 Census.

Please provide a detailed explanation of what you cannot do without the Census data.

Collecting additional data on Joblessness

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated that collecting additional data on Joblessness may be beneficial. This would provide a broader view of the potential labour force and may include data on all people who don't have a job but who want a job (not just those who are unemployed) and their availability to work.

[▶ Assessment criteria](#)

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

What aspects of Joblessness would be of use to you and why?

Please consider the assessment criteria detailed above.

Collecting data on Employment arrangements/Job security

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated that collecting data on Employment arrangements/Job security measures may be beneficial. This may include data on whether an employee is working on a permanent, casual or fixed-term basis.

► [Assessment criteria](#)

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

What aspects of Employment arrangements/Job security would be of use to you and why?

Please consider the assessment criteria detailed above.

Do you have any further information on the Work topics to inform our assessment?

Potential changes - Ancestry and Ethnic identity

What we are considering

The 2021 Census collected information on how a person identifies their ancestry. Ancestry can be related to the place a person or their parents or their grandparents were born, or the cultural group they most identify with. This helps to understand our diverse culture.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Ancestry and Ethnic identity. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

The questions begin with a focus on Ancestry, followed by questions on Ethnic identity.

[► More information](#)

You can find more information about [Ancestry](#) in our Census dictionary. The ABS has also released an information paper on [Understanding and using Ancestry data](#).

Assessment criteria

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

Do you currently use Ancestry data from the Census? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, please explain how you use this data.

To what extent does this data currently meet your needs? (Select one)

- ☐ Fully
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Do not have a need for the data

Please provide a detailed explanation why the data does or does not meet your needs.

Collecting up to four ancestries

People were able to provide up to two responses in the 2021 Census. If more than two ancestries applied, the instructions were to provide the two ancestries the person most closely identifies with.

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated a desire to expand the Ancestry question to collect up to four ancestries instead of only two, to reflect more varied multicultural backgrounds. However, allowing additional responses may add complexity when analysing the output data.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Census collected up to four ancestries.

Please consider both the positives and negatives, if applicable, when responding to this question.

Collecting data on Ethnic identity

Ancestry in the Australian context is complex as there are many people in Australia with origins and heritage which they may or may not strongly identify with.

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated a desire for data on ethnic identity because it allows people to select the culture that they identify with. Collecting data on ethnic identity is also complex given there are differences in what is understood by the term 'ethnicity'.

Is there benefit in collecting Ethnic identity in addition to Ancestry data in the Census? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

If yes, please provide a detailed explanation of what is expected to be provided by collecting ethnic identity that ancestry does not provide. Include examples on how the data would be used for each topic.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Census only collected Ethnic identity (in replacement of Ancestry data).

Please consider both the positives and negatives, if applicable, when responding to this question.

If the Census were to collect Ethnic identity data, should more than one ethnicity be collected? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Do you have any further information on the Ancestry and/or Ethnic identity topics to inform our assessment?

Potential changes - Language

What we are considering

The 2021 Census collected information on whether a person uses a language other than English at home and if so, the main non-English language used at home.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Language. This information will help us finalise our assessment against the criteria.

[► More information](#)

You can find more information about [Language used at home](#) in our Census dictionary.

Assessment criteria

The ABS uses a range of criteria to assess whether it includes topics in the Census or surveys. We will be considering the following criteria when reviewing your answers below:

1. The topic is of current national importance.
2. There is a need for data at the national level, and either the local level or for small population groups.
3. There is likely to be a continuing need for data on the topic following the Census.
4. There are no other suitable alternative data sources or solutions that could meet the topic need.

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic assessment criteria](#) on the ABS website.

Do you currently use Language used at home data from the Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

To what extent does this data currently meet your needs? (Select one)

- ☐ Fully
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ Not at all

0 Do not have a need for the data

Please provide a detailed explanation why the data does or does not meet your needs.

Collecting data on main language used

In the 2021 Census, if a person used only English at home, the instructions were to select 'No, English only', even if they could speak another language.

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated that there are households where some or all household members' main language is not English, but English is used in the household as it is the only common language.

Removing the 'at home' context from the current question may allow people to accurately reflect the language they use the most, and therefore allow a better understanding of linguistic diversity in Australia. However, this would mean the data may not be comparable with data from previous Censuses.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Census removed the 'at home' context.

Please consider both the positives and negatives, if applicable, when responding to this question.

Collecting data on multiple languages used

In the 2021 Census, if more than one language other than English was used at home, the person was instructed to only select the one that was used most often.

Feedback received during the first phase of consultation indicated that the inability to provide more than one language prevents respondents from providing significant linguistic and cultural information. Enabling multiple languages to be collected may also allow for improved sequencing to the English language proficiency question, resulting in more accurate data on this topic.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Census collected data on multiple languages used.

Please consider both the positives and negatives, if applicable, when responding to this question.

If the Census were to collect data on multiple languages used, would there be a need to understand which of these languages is the main language used? (Select one)

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Please explain why.

Do you have any further information on the Language topic to inform our assessment?

Potential changes - Religious affiliation

What we are considering

The 2021 Census collected information on a person's religious affiliation. Answering this question has always been optional.

The ABS is undertaking a review of the Religious Affiliation Standard (RAS). The aim of this review is to ensure the standard (the way the question is asked) is inclusive. One option being considered includes introducing a filter question to understand whether someone has a religion before asking which religion they are affiliated with. However, this would mean the data may not be comparable with data from previous Censuses.

How you can help

We would like to know how people use data relating to Religious affiliation. This information will be assessed as part of the review of the Religious Affiliation Standard.

[➤ More information](#)

You can find more information about [Religious affiliation](#) in our Census dictionary and about the [Religious Affiliation Standard](#) on the ABS website.

Do you currently use Religious affiliation data from the Census? (Select one)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

To what extent does this data currently meet your needs? (Select one)

- ☐ Fully
- ☐ Partially
- ☐ Not at all
- ☐ Do not have a need for the data

Please provide a detailed explanation why the data does or does not meet your needs.

Describe the expected impact for you or your organisation if the Census collected Religious affiliation through a two-part question.

Please consider both the positives and negatives, if applicable, when responding to this question.

Do you have any further information on the Religious affiliation topic to inform our assessment?

Additional feedback

A number of new or changed topics were assessed as having strong public value and will proceed to a feasibility assessment. The ABS has received sufficient feedback on these topics and does not require any further information to commence this assessment.

Although we are not requesting feedback, there is an option to provide information below regarding your need for data on the topic. You do not need to provide information that was already included in phase one.

[➤ More information](#)

You can find more information about the [2026 Census topic review: Phase one directions](#) on the ABS website.

Would you like to provide any feedback on the other proposed new topics for the 2026 Census? (Select all that apply)

Please refer to the 2026 Census topic review: Phase one directions publication linked further above for details on the proposed new topics.

- ☐ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity
- ☐ Additional measure of disability
- ☐ Dwelling occupancy status
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Household energy use
- ☐ Impact of natural disasters
- ☐ Journey to education (Mode of travel to educational institution and Name and address of educational institution)
- ☐ Main reason for moving in last 12 months
- ☐ Sexual orientation
- ☐ Shared care of children
- ☐ Variations of sex characteristics

You do not need to provide information that has already been included in a submission during phase one.

Would you like to provide any feedback on the other proposed changes to existing topics for the 2026 Census? (Select all that apply)

Please refer to the 2026 Census topic review: Phase one directions publication linked further above for details on the proposed changes.

- ☐ Attendance at an educational institution
- ☐ Country of birth of parents
- ☐ Hours worked
- ☐ Household and family relationships
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Long-term health conditions
- ☐ Marital status
- ☐ Mode of travel to work
- ☐ Persons temporarily absent on Census Night
- ☐ Proficiency in spoken English
- ☐ Sex

You do not need to provide information that has already been included in a submission during phase one.

Would you like to tell us anything else as part of your submission?

Please do not include any information which could identify you or another person.

You can also provide additional information to support your submission by uploading a file in PDF or Microsoft Word format. *Please make sure your file is under 25MB.*

Please note if you have provided consent for the ABS to publish your submitted information, this includes information provided in attachments.

Thank you...

On completion, please check and submit your form via:

Online: Please visit the [ABS Consultation Hub](#)

Email: census.content@abs.gov.au

Post: 2026 Census Topic Consultation
Locked Bag 10
Belconnen ACT 2616

Accessing and correcting your personal information

You have the right to request access to, and correction of, your personal information. Please contact census.content@abs.gov.au if you need to do this. We will take all reasonable steps to address your request.

Next Steps

This consultation will close on 8 September 2023. Please let other people know who may be interested in this consultation.

The ABS will review submissions and shortlist topics for testing.

In mid-2024 the ABS will make a recommendation to the Australian Government on the topics that could be included in the 2026 Census.

You can find further information about the [2026 Census topic review](#) process on the ABS website.